

Published: May 1, 2016, Kokomo Tribune [Page: A1, jump to A9]

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Photos by Kelly Lafferty Gerber | Kokomo Tribune

SPEECH: Former President Bill Clinton speaks at UAW Local 685 during the Howard County Democratic Party's pre-primary pancake breakfast during his visit to Kokomo on Saturday, April 30, 2016.



CROWDED: UAW Local 685 was standing-room only as the crowd listened to Former President Bill Clinton speak during the Howard County Democratic Party's pre-primary pancake breakfast on Saturday, April 30, 2016.



YOUNGER YEARS: Cathy Wainscott of Peru waits in line with her life-size cardboard cutout of former President Bill Clinton during his younger years in hopes of getting Clinton to sign it on Saturday after his speech at the UAW Local 685 on April 30, 2016.

Bill Clinton campaigns for wife in Kokomo, asks for support

By Cara Ball and Rob Burgess
Kokomo Tribune

Pancakes, politics and, of course, former President Bill Clinton brought dozens of Hoosiers out to United Auto Workers 685 early Saturday morning to promote his wife as she races for the democratic nomination.

The 42nd President of the United States was the featured guest of the Howard County Democratic Party's pancake breakfast. As keynote speaker, Clinton rallied the community for his wife, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, just days ahead of Tuesday's Indiana primary.

Clinton said the country needs someone with the right ideas and right understanding of what is going on around the world. Clinton said America needs a "proven effective change maker," and that person, he believes, is his wife.

The Clinton campaign said they weren't taking anything for granted in these final days before Hoosiers head to the polls.

"A broad coalition of Democrats have given Hillary Clinton a nearly insurmountable lead in pledged delegates, but she's working hard to earn the support of voters in every corner of Indiana. We're fighting for every vote by talking to Hoosiers about why Hillary Clinton is the only candidate

in this race who will break down the barriers that hold people back and deliver real results. Headed into the May 3 primary, our volunteers and supporters are knocking on doors and hitting the phones to share with friends, family, and neighbors Hillary Clinton's plans to protect Indiana's jobs, grow manufacturing, and make education affordable from cradle to college," said Stephanie Formas, Hillary for Indiana spokesperson.

Like most other pre-election speeches, Clinton touched on major topics such as economics, terrorism, job creation, as well as implementing paid family leave and loosening penalties for nonviolent drug offenses that often affect youth.

Clinton focused much of his speech on Indiana's job growth through manufacturing and the auto industry. And although mistakenly referring to Hoosiers as "Indianans" during his speech, Clinton didn't miss a beat discussing how Indiana has provided auto exports to China, and how the fairly new Chrysler transmission facility, built in Tipton County in 2014, has helped job growth in the region.

But, even with the economic growth of Indiana being highlighted in the speech, Clinton said other issues, both domestic and international, still loom.

"You've got to elect a president who knows from the first day what to do about this," Clinton said about the current state of affairs in America. He

said his wife, since having been the Secretary of State from 2009 to 2013, is well equipped to handle matters of government both here in the U.S. and abroad.

In the crowd, Ken Ferries, an adjunct professor at Ivy Tech Community College and former Kokomo city attorney for 25 years, wore both a pin supporting independent Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and a red baseball cap with the words "MAKE DONALD DRUMPF AGAIN" on it, a reference to a recent segment on "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver."

"We have much more in common than we have that divides us," he said of the differences between Sanders and Clinton. "I think Bernie has pushed Hillary a bit further to the progressive end of the party and that's probably why I've got a warm spot for Bernie. I'm also a realist. Hillary is going to be the candidate and I will happily support and vote for Hillary Clinton."

Mayor Greg Goodnight — who was at times holding the back door open to let in some fresh air — said they had not heard of any Sanders campaign stops planned in Kokomo before the primary, but that they would be "welcome" should they decide to make the trip.

With Republicans and Democrats often divided on major political issues, Clinton assured the crowd that Hillary is the woman to improve America, while bringing about bipartisanship.

"Here's the deal, this whole election comes down to whether you believe we can all grow together again like we did in the 1990s when I had the honor to serve," Clinton said. "I believe we can. And I believe that if you grow the economy from the middle out, and help lift people from the bottom up, we'll all rise together and we won't be so mad at each other."

Ferries said the Republican field was a "trainwreck," with moderates being driven from the party.

"It's self-inflicted wounds on their side," he said. "Sometimes when you ride the tiger, you end up inside the tiger, which is what happened to them. They lost control of it. I've got Republican friends ... and I feel bad for them."

Clinton encouraged Hoosiers to go out to the polls and take advantage of early voting through the weekend. Clinton ended by saying how he hoped Indiana would continue to support Hillary, as they did during the 2008 presidential primaries.

"I hope Indiana will stay with [Hillary,]" Clinton said. "Because she will stay with you."

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